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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000079

SIPDIS

STATE FOR ISN/CB, VCI/CCA, L/NPV, IO/MPR
BAGHDAD FOR REID AND HOLCOMBE
SECDEF FOR OSD/GSA/CN, CP>
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COMMERCE FOR BIS (BROWN, DENYER AND CRISTOFARO)
NSC FOR LUTES
WINPAC FOR WALTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2020

TAGS: PARM PREL OPCW CWC I2

SUBJECT: CWC: MEETING WITH IRAQI AMBASSADOR ON IRAQ'S CHEMICAL WEAPONS DESTRUCTION PLAN

REF: A. THE HAGUE 61
B. THE HAGUE 39
C. THE HAGUE 10

Classified By: Janet E. Beik for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is CWC-9-10

11. (U) This contains an action request: see para 9.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Delreps met with the Iraqi Ambassador on February 3 to follow up on the trilateral technical discussions in January on amending Iraq's initial chemical weapons (CW) declaration and preparing a destruction plan for presentation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Banaa was seized with trying to consolidate the plan before the current OPCW Director-General (DG) leaves office (Ref A) and before Iraq's government puts new people into key offices dealing with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), including his own post, following elections in March. He requested continuing U.S. support for Iraq's CW destruction. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) Delreps Beik and Granger met with Iraqi Ambassador Siamand Banaa and Delegate Muhammed Al-Miahi February 3 to discuss progress on the Iraqi CW destruction decisions following the trilateral (Iraq/U.S./OPCW Technical Secretariat) discussions held in January in The Hague (Ref B). Banaa had not himself attended those meetings and had last met with the U.S. Delegation in early January (Ref C). Banaa insisted that his government would "review" their initial declaration and not "amend" it, and that the Technical Secretariat (TS) had accepted the term "review". (Del Note: We are not so sure the TS has approved the term. End Note.)

14. (C) Banaa was concerned about the optics in the Executive Council (EC) of changing their declaration. Delrep noted that amendments are made frequently by States Parties to the Convention, and

that the "review" of the declaration in light of new information from documents recently received from the United Nations is a reasonable explanation for amending Iraq's initial declaration. Al-Miahi confirmed that MFA Director Jwan Khioka is working on the formal request to the UN for copies of the UNMOVIC documents (Ref B). Neither Al-Miahi nor Banaa had further news on the status of GOI approval of the amended ("reviewed") declaration.

¶15. (C) Banaa made an explicit plea for speed and an assistance package, including U.S. assistance, in putting the plan proposed in the January meetings into place. He described Iraq's election process as likely to take months to announce results and form a new government. He wants to have a CW destruction plan before the Executive Council, and Council approval for destruction to start, before OPCW Director-General Rogelio Pfirter leaves office in July. Banaa himself will be transferred back to Baghdad at the end of March and said there will likely be at least a three-month gap before a new ambassador arrives. If the destruction plan lingers until new people are in place in the Ministries and INMD in Baghdad following the election in March, it will require beginning from scratch and could take years to get to the stage Iraq has reached now in planning destruction of the two bunkers. He also pointed to the U.S. deadline for troop withdrawals from Iraq and said it would be in the U.S. interest to have this CW plan settled before then.

¶16. (C) Banaa sees the U.S., the UK and Germany as the key donors to provide assistance for Iraq's CW destruction. Delrep replied that while the U.S. would look at how we might assist, we would need to see the plan, as would the other governments; coordination of international expertise and support would be critical. Finding appropriate expertise and/or money would also take time, so the sooner there is an agreed plan, the sooner we could determine any U.S. support. Banaa welcomed the role of Lithuanian Ambassador Verba, Chairman of the Conference of the States Parties (CSP), in helping to coordinate donors contributions (Ref A), but said the U.S./UK/German collaboration was essential. Delrep asked about Iran's public offers of assistance; Banaa said he had told the Iranians not to use Iraq in its "shadow-boxing" with the U.S. He did not take their offer seriously and would not include them in any destruction coordination.

¶17. (C) Banaa said the Iraqi team coming from Baghdad to the February Executive Council (EC-59) should bring details for discussions on the margins of the Executive Council. "It won't be as detailed as the U.S. DOD plan we received in Washington in October," he said, but he thought they would have "facts and figures" to hammer out a precise plan. Banaa would like to move forward as far as possible in February during the EC week. If the plan can be agreed, the Iraqi presentation to the EC in April (EC-60) could also be prepared and agreed. The Technical Secretariat (TS) would like the Iraqi documents to be distributed in March ahead of EC-60 so that delegations will be prepared to discuss the changes. Iraq plans to report in February that they are working on the destruction plan for the April meeting.

¶18. (C) Banaa said he wanted the two experts from Baghdad who had attended the January meeting (Mohanad Al-Helli and Khalid Al-Janabi) to be invited to EC-59 in February, in addition to the

Iraqi delegation from Baghdad. He strongly believed the two experts would give continuity to the discussion and could address the proposed destruction plan realistically. He was quite impressed with their level of expertise when they came in January. Banaa said a letter from the U.S. specifically requesting these two individuals would help prompt their inclusion on the delegation, and Al-Miahi asked whether funding might be available for their travel.

¶9. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Del requests a letter from Dr. Mikulak as U.S. Representative to the OPCW to Iraqi Ambassador Banaa requesting the attendance of Mohanad Al-Helli and Khalid Al-Janabi on the Iraqi delegation to EC-59 to continue discussions begun in January on the destruction proposal. Del welcomes any information from Baghdad on whom the GOI is sending to The Hague for the Council meeting (February 22-26).

¶10. (C) DEL COMMENT: While we welcome Banaa's optimism that the destruction plan will come together by April, he still appears to be assuming Qtogether by April, he still appears to be assuming that other governments, particularly the United States, will provide most if not all of the funding for destruction of Iraq's remaining chemical weapons, as well as for the toxic remnants in Bunker 41. He has received sympathy from the Technical Secretariat and other delegations in The Hague, but no firm promises yet. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) Beik sends.

LEVIN